



Fighting Alongside the Most Vulnerable Among Us

Mitzi Jonelle Tan, Youth Advocates for Climate Action PH, Philippines

☀ Call to Action

Get involved with Mitzi's chapter at yacap.org. If you're not from the Philippines, connect with the global youth climate movement at Fridays-forFuture.org.

☀ Values

- Courage
- Committed
- Leader
- Environmentalism
- Solidarity
- Creative

☀ Lessons Learned

When Mitzi learned directly from the Lumad people about how they were being threatened, harassed, and even killed, she knew she had to do something to help them. We all need to listen to the people who are protecting our environment, and find ways to help them.

Mitzi has formed a bridge between the people living on the land that is being destroyed, and worldwide organizations that are working to fight the effects of climate change. This kind of collaboration is essential in order to solve the global problems we're facing.

It is important to shine a light on, and listen to the people who are impacted the most by climate change. They can't do it alone, and the protection of the earth protects us all.

In 2017, Mitzi Jonelle Tan went with her college's student council on an integration project with the Lumad indigenous people, where one of the leaders told her about how his people were being displaced, harassed, and even killed just for protecting their lands and the environment from extractive mining companies.

"The simplicity of how he said something so tragic, in passing, about his way of life... I realized that individual lifestyle change is not enough when peoples' lives are at stake. It's on us to do more." So Mitzi founded Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP) in partnership with Fridays For Future, to help change the conditions for Most Affected People and Areas (MAPA) in the Philippines. She focuses much of her time fighting for Indigenous defenders of the environment. "They are the ones who really keep me going on this journey," she says. "What I do is easy."

☀ Language Arts

As climate change becomes more prevalent, more and more people will join the ranks of "vulnerable populations." Write a list of no more than six steps that people in the developed world could use to help vulnerable populations fight back. Support your suggestions with at least one source for each suggestion that you have consulted in your research. (Several of your suggestions may be supported by the same source.) After you have your list and your sources, create an annotated bibliography of the sources. The bibliography must include citations (MLA format); a brief summary of the source; and why you found it relevant.

Choose any of [YACAP's points of unity](#)¹ and write a research paper on what it means; what it would entail to act on this particular principle; and what would be the best ways to get

involved. Based on your research, create your own points of unity to apply to your country.

Erosion is one of the biggest issues for populations that live near the coast. The Philippines is incredibly vulnerable to this type of environmental damage because it is made up mostly of islands. Conduct an online search about the damage erosion has caused to the Philippines; then create a photographic or video diary of the damage, showing how it has affected the lives of the people.

STEM Activities

Mitzi is a very well-rounded sustainability activist. She participated in the Youth Advocate for Climate Action Philippines Global Climate Strike in 2019. Create a list of the pros and cons of a climate strike. Follow up with a written summary explaining why it's important not only to participate, but to also understand the reasons why you are participating.

As Mitzi has shown, the Philippines is one of the world's most susceptible countries to natural disasters. Research one sustainability issue that citizens in the Philippines are facing. Identify an organization that helps to combat this issue; if there isn't one, explain why the development of such an organization is important.

Compare and contrast the effect of climate events in the Philippines to those in your local community. If there is a difference, explain why it is important to acknowledge these differences and assist communities that do not have the supplies to adequately combat these events.

Sustainability Innovations

Care² and Team Rubicon USA³ are two of the major players assisting the Philippines in disasters like Typhoon Haiyan. How could Mitzi partner with these organizations to increase preparation for, as well as post-disaster relief?

In addition to organizations that assist with disaster relief, Global Giving includes a group called the [International Disaster Volunteers⁴](#); they are currently working on 386 projects in the Philippines alone. Identify one of these projects and convince your teacher that you and your classmates should support this project.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Environmental and Climate Activist. While Mitzi hopes the job of climate activist will one day no longer be necessary, that time will be many decades from now. In the meantime, monumental effort is needed to slow down the building of fossil fuel infrastructure and the extraction and burning of coal, gas, and oil; and to more quickly shift to greener sources of energy. You can become an activist right now: organize a [Friday climate strike⁵](#) at your town hall, or pressure your school to divest from fossil fuel stocks and/or invest in renewable energy. Visit [Idealist.org⁶](#) to explore activist jobs, internships, and volunteer opportunities available near you.

Defender of Environmental and Indigenous Rights Activists. As Mitzi's story reveals, Indigenous peoples are often bold defenders of the earth, and are thus often subject to threat or violence. Supporting them in their quest to protect and heal the land can be a valuable way to help. Groups like the Center for International Environmental Law undertake efforts to protect environmental activists. Learn about [CIEL's work here⁷](#).

Sustainable Land Management. Mitzi calls the foresters, farmers, and fishers "defenders of nature." Have you considered a career caring for the land in [sustainable farming⁸](#), [sustainable aquaculture⁹](#), or [agroforestry¹⁰](#)?

Coastal Zone Manager. 45 percent of the world's people live on coasts. With climate change bringing about sea level rise, there will be a significant need for individuals to help manage development and coastal protection, which includes everything from habitat conservation and restoration to building coastline defenses. For a look at the broad field of coastal management visit [here](#)¹¹.

Disaster Management Specialist. The Philippines is one of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis. But between flooding, fires, droughts, and other climate effects, every community needs to be prepared for and able to respond to disasters, including the management and allocation of limited resources. Does this field sound interesting to you? [Learn more here](#)¹².

1 <https://yacap.org/about/>

2 <https://www.care.org/our-work/where-we-work/philippines/>

3 <https://teamrubiconusa.org/>

4 <https://www.globalgiving.org/donate/3243/international-disaster-volunteers-idv/>

5 <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>

6 <https://www.idealists.org/en/>

7 <https://www.ciel.org/issue/defending-the-defenders/>

8 <http://greencollarblog.org/sustainable-agriculture-jobs/>

9 <https://www.discoveryeducation.com/>

10 <https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/agroforester>

11 <https://coast.noaa.gov/>

12 <https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/disaster-management-specialist>

